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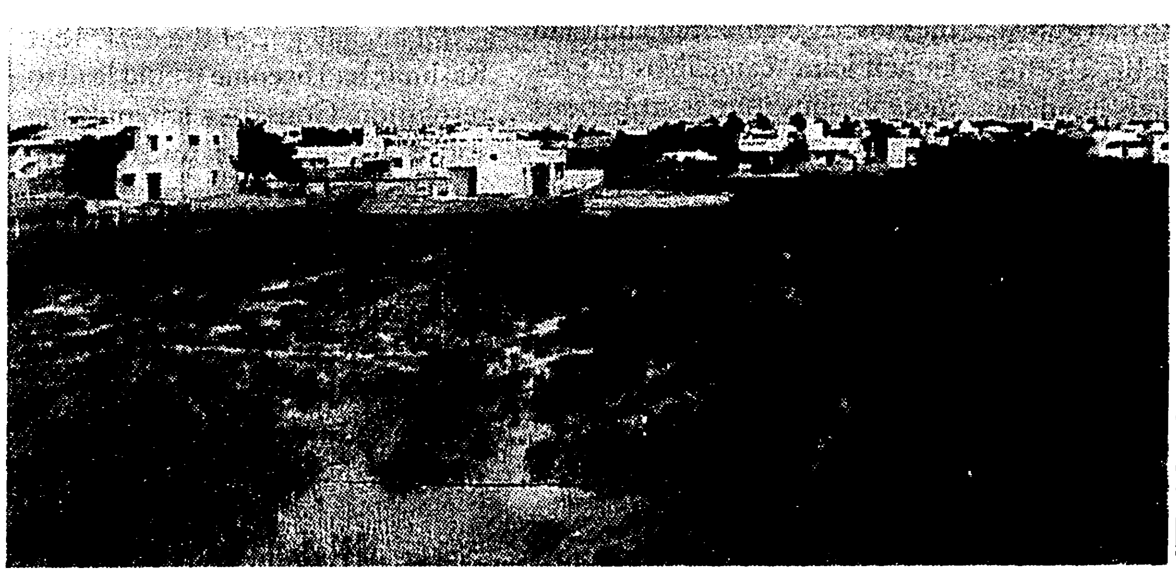
WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

INSIDE

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Vol. X No. 13 FREE ISSUE October 16-31, 2000







The Pallikkaranai marsh is slowly vanishing with more and more man-generated activity going on. In these pictures by RAJIND N CHRISTY *are houses being built on swamp (above) and facing perennial water-logging; landfilling going on to lay the foundation for an MRTS (Metro) railway station (above right); and, on right, new pipes being laid, to carry sewage to Perungudi, by the side of a new road being developed through the swamp. A map of the swamp (below right) shows a wetland that will soon vanish as a result of all the new construction indicated. This may well affect Madras during a heavy monsoon.*

The death of a marsh

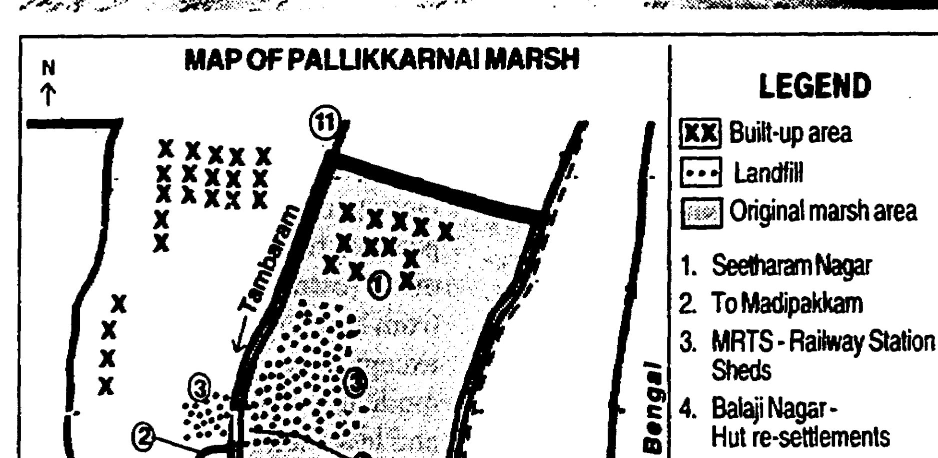
The Pallikkaranai Marsh on the Velachery–Tambaram road in south Chennai is in its death throes. Even though India is a signatory to the Ramsar Convention (which aims at protecting wetlands that sustain wildlife, safeguard water supplies and control floods) and the Central Minister for Environment and Forests (including Wildlife) is from the Chennai South constituency, this marsh is being destroyed at the fastest rate possible.

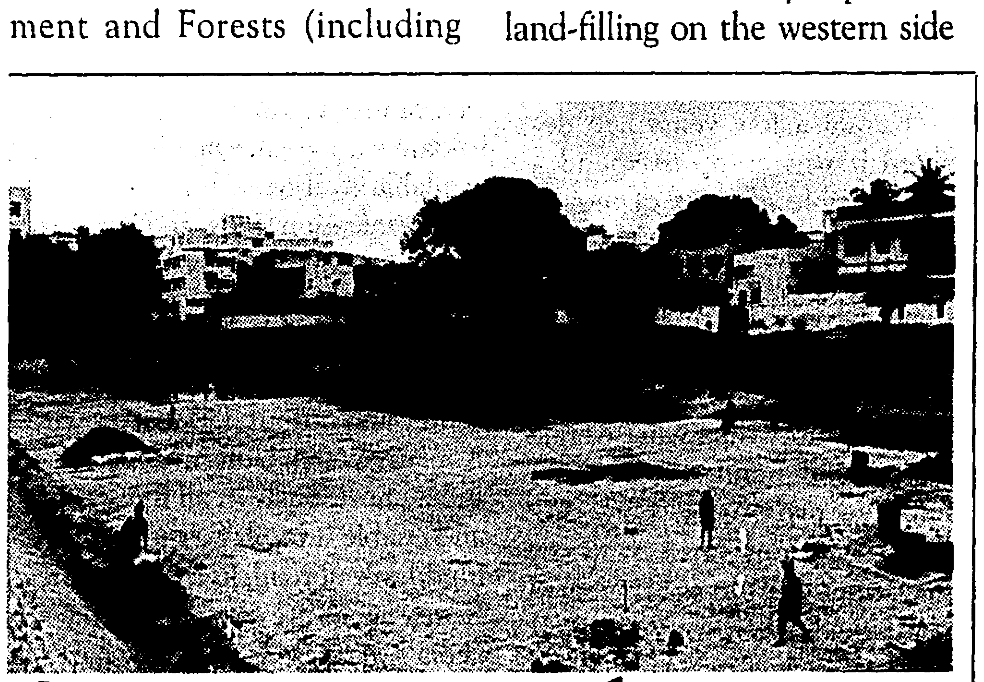
• by A. Rajaram

The marsh at Pallikkaranai was originally about 30 sq km. Half of it was lost by haphazard land-filling on the western side of the road. Now a Southern Railway locoshed is coming up in the remaining area, an 80-foot road is being laid to link Perungudi with the Velachery-Tambaram Road, further land-filling from the Old Mahabalipuram Road to the Pallikkaranai end is in progress and Tidel Park II is proposed.

This wetland, where reed grass grows to a metre and half, serves, like all such wetlands as a natural filter, removing pollutants from the water flowing through it while recharging aquifers below. Water is cleaned as the wetland soils and vegetation trap sediments, heavy metals and microbes, while the sun-

(Continued on Page 6)





Saving a tank again

The Rotary Club of Madras (Main) has started work with the assistance of the TVS Group to once more desilt the Chitrakulam Tank in Mylapore and make it a water reservoir again. Besides the desilting, the Club and TVS plan to ensure that the drainage leading to the tank from the area around is repaired and the bunds and walls restored. "It will be just like it was fifty years ago," a Rotary spokesman assured Madras Musings. *He also said that all those living around the tank had formed an NGO and had assured the Club that they would look after the tank and its maintenance in the future. If they do, sustainability would be ensured, but if the initial enthusiasm wanes, it will only add up to a waste of money and manhours. We hope that will not be the case, as in the past.* (Photograph by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

Two buildings in search of conservation

The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, Tamil Nadu Regional Chapter, has had preliminary discussions with their owners, to examine two buildings designed by Robert Chisholm and recommend conservation measures. However, the discussions have not led to formal requests to go ahead with the work and submit formal reports. The two buildings are: *The Victoria Public Hall* (the Town Hall), Madras, and the main block of the American College, Madurai. The discussions in Madurai also covered other buildings in the College campus.

Victoria Public Hall, inaugurated in 1887, was governed by the Victoria Public Hall Trust and later leased to the Corporation of Chennai till the 1980s, after which the Trust wanted to resume ownership. This it has done, through litigation, but the handing over process has been delayed, in turn delaying its plans to initiate conservation studies preparatory to restoration of the building.

Built on 25 grounds of prime land with a built-up area of 25,000 sq.ft., the ground floor comprises a large hall, rented

(Continued on Page 4)

How do we house the urban poor?

'Housing the Urban Poor' was the theme of a recent seminar at the Max Mueller Bhavan, but what answers did it have for a third of the City — over a million people — who live in slums and whose numbers are only growing? *The Man From Madras Musings* did not hear any tangible solutions, but it appeared to him that everyone accepted that we would have to live with slums and the only question was how we could improve life in them. The unfortunately named Slum Clearance Board's answer to that is to encourage and offer training for income-generating activities that can be undertaken at home and add to the family's income. But what use is additional money when its environmental improvement programme envisages only one bath and one toilet for every ten families in a slum, a public fountain for every twenty families and one street light at 40 metre intervals on the road (this, *MMM* presumes, does not apply to the bylanes within the slum)? And when it does not mention drainage, paving of soil-built bylanes bound to become quagmires in the rain, or garbage disposal?!

Indeed, it strikes *MMM* that even if all that was not mentioned was implemented in the slums, in addition to the inadequate minimum of infrastructure that has been created, it would be totally inadequate, because the focus on counselling is income-generation, not on getting the slum-dwellers to improve their living conditions. Slum improvement does not automatically come with additional incomes; many a slum dweller has the income to move to a better life, but belonging to a village-come-to-town, he is reluctant to move out of the environment he and his neighbours — most of them from the same rural areas — have established for themselves. In which case, what is the answer?

The architects and engineers had a host of ideas on how housing for the urban poor should be provided. A large space is needed to provide families the kind of houses with the minimum requirements THEY agree on. They should feel free to choose their neighbours. All infrastructure — particularly public transport to enable them to get to work and school easily — should be planned right from the beginning and be in place by the time accommodation is occupied. The Gramin Bank way in Bangladesh — one of the great success stories of poverty alleviation — should be followed and housing loans provided without collateral but with resident collectors, also members of the new settlement, going about making the monthly collection. This type of settlement development envisaged Government providing the land and infrastructure and loaning the money for the settler to have himself built a better low-cost house, the repayment instalments being 'rent' payable to a people's organisation and not avaricious landlords or goondas who run most of the city's slums.

This could well be the best way to go for resettlement. And the Slum Clearance Board's current way — without sufficient interaction or settler involvement — could be the worst way. But these suggestions provide no answers to already existing neighbourhood slums and rundown tenement highrise (as by the Marina and in the Long Tank bed alongside Anna Salai in Teynampet), where there is no land space to build the kind of new homes *MMM* heard spoken of. Even if a solution is found to all this, one major issue was ignored at the seminar, as it was elsewhere — how do you prevent the growth of new slums?

Move from City

For 350 years and more, from the laying of the foundations of the City, slums have been a part of Madras life. They have been the homes of villagers-come-to-town to meet the demands for labour and service made by the better off who needed both. And, by whatever clusters the employers lived, this service sector established a settlement of its own — John Pereira's Paracheri, the Dharavi of Georgetown in the 18th Century, perhaps the first. Having to do it on its own steam, with no help from employer or Government, except for wages paid based on a modicum of food, a little clothing and less shelter, such settlements inevitably developed as cramped villages of like-minded persons, usually from one area of origin, who shared a common experience: that of being poor. At no time in Madras's history was it ever thought fit to stop this migration.

But migration to Madras or other urban centres, *The Man From Madras Musings* must point out, cannot be stopped only by the creation of jobs in rural areas. Those areas too need an infrastructure comparable to even the creaking infrastructure of our cities. Education, transport, electricity, water on tap, all need to be improved, apart from establishing industries in the rural areas, if the rural migrant is to stay put in his own village not far from a rural township offering employment. If this is not going to happen and the migration to urban nodes continues, there will have to be a level of involvement by industry and other employers in helping provide homes for those working in their establishments. In fact, taking off from what was stated, *MMM* would think that in these circumstances it is fast becoming necessary for an industrial policy to be evolved making housing an important component of it, with employers playing a major role in ensuring adequate hygienic housing for every employee — something organisations like CII have not addressed. *MMM* realises it sounds like an impossible dream — and that it will always be easier to do so in areas away from the city where new roots are being put down, but since that move has begun, it might be wise to have such a policy go hand in hand with it.

This is particularly necessary, as one speaker pointed out, in this age of globalisation. Once, the slums of Madras came under the purview of the Labour Department, but since the 1970s, they have been the concern of the Slum Clearance Board formed at that time. The change reflects what has been going on ever since, Gita Ramakrishnan of a construction workers' union pointed out. Globalisation, she said, recognises the workforce but does not consider the worker or the conditions in which he lives. It is time, she said, for these organisations to recognise the city's slums as workers' colonies and contribute to their rehabilitation.

If there is anything the seminar did, it was to point the finger at two things. One, the need to stop the migration by moving out employment opportunities to rural areas and providing those who live in those areas the necessary infrastructure to make the workers want to stay there in comfort and grab the employment opportunities that have come their way. And two, for the employer to play a greater role in providing adequate housing and infrastructure for their employees. These, *MMM* feels, are priorities to stop the problem from growing. If, thereafter, the problem is restricted to what exists, then we need a massive infusion of funds — as aid or loans — to put into practice the ideas about slum improvement expressed. Without that kind of money, and the proper and imaginative use of it, the problem is not going to go away, no matter how many seminars we hold, *MMM* is inclined to think.

Meanwhile, here are a couple of thoughts for the day expressed at the seminar, if you want to be emotional about the issues: "Slums are people, not places. Evictions only destroy people. To create you don't have to destroy. What needs to be done is to remove poverty, not the poor." Sadly, it is not a priority in the city where it needs the interaction of the government, industry, NGOs — and the slum dwellers

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Southern tourism

Yet another consultation of the Tourism Secretaries of the Southern States was held recently, *The Man From Madras Musings* notes, and once again they discussed the "modalities to launch joint campaigns to promote various tourist attractions in South India." *MMM* has been hearing of such campaigns from the early Seventies when the first one was held — and he has heard nothing of anything significant coming out from them. The reason undoubtedly has had to do with wherewithal even if all the States can agree on what jointly needs to be done.

One consequence of that first meeting in the Seventies was the preparation of what might locally be seen as a considerable amount of promotional material but which in international terms was only a drop in the ocean. Worse, these booklets, folders, posters etc. were made available only at the Government Tourism offices of each state and at a few of our embassies abroad, waiting for the tourists to come and pick them up. Unfortunately in the tourist industry, it doesn't happen like that. You have to go out and saturate the market with information and hard-selling — and that costs the kind of money that will take away most of the COMBINED OVERALL budgets of these departments.

Kerala a few years ago decided it was going to spend a considerable amount of money on promotion — and it has seen the international travel houses they have reached responding. If the South is to get the same kind of response, it combinedly needs to spend more than what Kerala is now doing and embark on a massive promotion targeting travel offices and holiday magazines apart from bringing in plane-loads of travel journalists and travel agents. *MMM* has always thought that kind of promotion can only be done if those concerned can move away from their political masters as well as their bureaucratic traditions. But that's unlikely to happen, isn't it? So *MMM* will continue to hear of such meetings every year — with nothing happening to swell the numbers of tourists, particularly the foreign ones.

A diplomat's views

When Ambassador Eric Gonsalves, former Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs and at present Editor-in-Chief of the journal *South Asian Survey*, spoke in Chennai recently on India's foreign policy in the next decade, he surveyed the globe, but the overriding impression was that India's focus would remain Pakistan. He fervently wished it would also look further afield.

"The dialogue of the deaf" that Kashmir had become would lead to resolution, Gonsalves felt, only if a solution along the lines of the Shimla Agreement was pursued and India continued demonstrating its goodwill as it had in the past when it agreed to discuss a realigning of the Line of Control for a settlement. *The Man From Madras Musings* was glad to hear such a view from someone once associated with South Block, but the caveats he added were areas of concern. Pakistan, Gonsalves suggested, spoke with two tongues and one drew its inspiration from Pakistan's staunch belief that India would break up before long and that Pakistan would then have its day. The other is that after Kargil followed Lahore, India feels such "a deep sense of betrayal" that all those who had planned Lahore no longer want to have anything to do with Pakistan. Which, reading between the lines, *MMM* sees as India going to spend far more time on attempting to get the better of Pakistan than on getting to be a great power.

India has everything going for it to be a great power, felt Gonsalves... agricultural riches, a fast improving industrial scene, a widespread educational system and a large pool of trained manpower. But *MMM* was glad to hear him say that none of this would lead India to greatness unless the country improved on ALL these counts. Agriculture can produce still more surpluses but these need to be converted into exports, particularly value-added ones. Industry needs to produce world-class products of impeccable quality. Education needs to be vastly improved and made more up-to-date with greater facilities made available to it as well as improved communication skills, and it should not be looking at only how to export manpower but should also ensure better manpower to serve the country at home with greater efficiency and output. Closer ties with Koreans would, Gonsalves felt, help India enormously in all these areas and enable it to play a more meaningful role abroad, as the capacities Korea needs are about the same as India's. And there is a large part of the world where we can play that role — South and Southeast Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Russia and Latin America, if only we did not behave like snobs oriented totally to the Whites of the Western World while at the same time adopting a babu mentality towards them. Hooray, *MMM* almost cried aloud, when Gonsalves laid it down as it sadly is, when India looks at South and Southeast Asia! — MMM

OUR READERS WRITE

Attention needed

Much has been talked by all about Singara Chennai, but there seems to be no serious attempt made to achieve it by the authorities who really matter. If the Corporation only implements some of the following, it would achieve at least 50% of what is desired:

1. Stop indiscriminate erection of cutouts and hoardings.
2. Severe action to be taken on institutions pasting posters on walls, electrical switch boards etc. They have not spared even the new flyovers.
3. City buses to be maintained properly. Forget the ordinary buses, even in Express buses, though you pay double the fare, you feel you are sitting in the middle of a garbage dump. We can learn from BEST services of Mumbai.
4. The international garbage collection agency Onyx may have adapted themselves to Indian conditions. But they seem to be concentrating more on main streets at the expense of the minor roads.

P. Raghavan
H/22/11, Vaigai Street
Besant Nagar
Chennai 600 090.

'Give us pavements'

Some NGOs and I had a meeting recently with the Transport Commissioner on the subject of 'Road Safety Measures' that should be taken by the Government, including the Corporation. It was represented that every road in the city must have a pavement of width of at least 6 feet on the left side of the road protected by a grill. The roads must be only for vehicular traffic and not for pedestrians or for jaywalking. But, it was pointed out by us, people walk on the roads because there are no pavements. Even the existing pavements are with numerous potholes and unsafe for walking. Pavement vendors and hoardings also occupy much of these pavements. For instance, the pavements near the Music Academy, at the junction at Kodambakkam High Road, Nungambakkam High Road, and several other places have been made unusable by the iron rods supporting hoardings.

C. Lakshmi Narain
Advocate
11, Kandappa Achari Street
Purasawalkam
Chennai 600 007.

More, please

Two people related only by my wanting more of their work:

★ The celebrated naturalist M. Krishnan had at least one more talent which, to my knowledge, has not been mentioned in any of the eulogies that have appeared in the press recently following the publication of his selected writings. Years ago, I bought a slim paperback, *The Tales of Dawood Khan* (Sangam Books/Orient Longman, 1977) containing some forty-odd short pieces — stories as well as some non-fiction — in M. Krishnan's delightful style. In the book he succeeds in using stories to make, with remarkable economy of expression, wry comments on a whole range of human situations. Obviously his pursuit of knowledge in the animal kingdom did not prevent him from observing the behaviour of *homo sapiens* with equal fervour, though he may have (prudently?) recorded his views in a more palatable form! At least that is my layman's verdict.

There could be other gems of writing by him which most of us know nothing about, and I hope that a more substantial 'collected works' will follow. I think there are many who would agree with me that his writings constitute 'heritage'. For me, however, even his *Nature's Spokesman* must wait till a paperback version appears which will, hopefully, suit my purse.

★ A recent book by Eric Stracey, former IGP, Madras State, titled *Growing up in AngloIndia* prompted me to enquire from the publishers whether there was any plan for a sequel covering his years in police service. My letter got passed on to the author who sent me a nice reply, mentioning that his police memoirs had already been published by Vikas under the title *Odd Man In*, but it had suffered much from a lack of proof-reading, since he was in the process of moving to Australia at the time. Anyway, it is long out of print, so he is preparing a revised version on his own for limited private distribution.

Thomas Tharu
4-A-7, Kasyap
Nehrunagar 4th Street
Chennai 600 020.

Licensed to kill?

The unruly and reckless manner in which public transport bus drivers ply on Chennai roads makes you wonder what kind of permit they hold: a licence to drive or a licence to kill?

As a daily commuter on the city roads, I have had the privilege of having a few near mishaps on my way to work, most of them involving public transport buses. About three years ago, I was fortunate enough to have the rear-end of my brand new car disfigured by a very 'kind and generous' bus driver while I was waiting at a traffic signal. Although I brought this to the immediate notice of the traffic police at the lights who requested us to park our vehicles on the side of the road, to my utter shock the bus driver ignored the instructions and drove on. Since I was determined to have a 'dialogue' with this 'remarkable' man, I decided to pursue him. After a long chase, I managed to catch up with him. When I questioned him on his wrongdoing, I had the honour of hearing a mouthful of abuse along with threats to remove my car from his path, failing which I would meet with dire consequences. In the few minutes that it took me to inform the traffic police at that traffic junction, he found the opportunity to drive away once again. This time around, I could not locate him.

Numerous police enquiries, meticulous forensic examinations, exhaustive vehicular inspections, tedious legal proceedings and three years have gone by since, but justice is yet to prevail.

What sets public transport bus drivers apart from other commuters? Why are they permitted to exercise their 'king of the road' attitudes and their 'power' to break all existing regulations? Battering vehicles, knocking down pedestrians, stopping in the middle of the road thereby obstructing all following traffic and driving through red traffic signals are customary. The police are silent spectators to all these and more. Why are not public transport drivers held responsible for these innumerable acts of misconduct? It is tragic that appropriate stern measures are not being taken by the authorities to discipline them.

Sanjay Cherian
4A, Dr. J. Jayalalitha Nagar
Mogappair
Chennai 600 050.

The handicapped — discriminated against by Govt. transport

All schoolgoing children are given year-long free bus pass at the beginning of the academic year to attend school. However, in the case of schoolgoing *handicapped children*, the case is different. They are subjected to much bureaucratic harassment such as:

- **Every year, they have to get a certificate from their schools for proof.**
- **This has to be produced at the Social Welfare Department for its endorsement on the Identity Card issued by the Government.**
- **Then the parents have to rush to the Metropolitan Transport Corporation headquarters to get the pass. There they won't issue the bus pass on all days. They indicate a date of their choice and the parents have to go on that day only.**
- **After all this, the pass issued is valid for a month only. Every month, the parent has to go to MTC office for renewal.**
- **These passes are issued in such a way that the handicapped child has to show it to the conductor everyday for endorsement.**
- **The worst example of discrimination is that handicapped children get bus passes for only 7 or 8 months of the year! By the time these monthly passes are issued, it is August. Then in March, they stop issuing passes. From April, handicapped children have to go in buses like the rest of the public, paying for their tickets.**

These difficulties have been brought to the attention of the Chief Minister through Secretaries of various government departments and to various political parties and NGOs. But alas! Nobody has bothered to even acknowledge the letters. However, last year, the State Commissioner for the Handicapped, Tamil Nadu, recommended to all transport corporations issuance of yearly passes to handicapped children. But nobody seems to heed his request.

S.R. Rajagopal
"Triveni House"
I Floor, 57 (Old 27)
Eswaradass Lala Street
Thiruvellikkeni, Chennai 600 005.

A couple of slips

In my letters 'Music Makers' (MM, September 16th), 'Sangeetha Vadyalaya' has been printed as 'Sangeetha Vidyalaya'. But it is in fact 'Vadyalaya', established for the purpose of making quality musical instruments at affordable rates, but unfortunately wound up after Prof. P. Sambamoorthy's time. The 'Vadyalaya' innovatively brought out a mechanical *tambura* in which the strings were strummed with the aid of a rotor blade instead of the hand. But since the tonal quality and resonance were not upto the mark, this instrument did not gain popularity. The present electronic *tambura*, which resembles a small '*sruti* box' is a different one. That mechanical *tambura* resembled the conventional one.

Also, I had in that letter stated that Prof. P. Sambamoorthy's name had been omitted in the articles on 'Century Makers in Carnatic Music'. I find that his name did find a place in the article in MM, July 1st, along with his monumental works. I regret my faux pas.

T.M. Sundararaman
19, Nallappan Street
Mylapore
Chennai 600 004.

A professor remembered

Dr. S.T. Achar, one of the eminent residents of Edward Elliot's Road (MM, September 16th), is best known as a pioneer in child healthcare. He made Paediatrics a separate speciality. What is less well known is the fact that before becoming a paediatrician, he was a general physician of outstanding merit. He would often make a correct diagnosis quickly from the symptoms and clinical examination of the patient.

He was a very good teacher and a kind-hearted person, and his students had a great admiration and affection for him. They used to call him "The absent-minded professor" as he had a tendency to be forgetful of his personal, though not professional, matters. He was an Assistant Physician in the Government General Hospital in the early 1940s and the excellent training I had under him as a final year student and as his House Surgeon helped me considerably in my work as an Army Medical Officer.

He was also an expert bridge player.

Dr. H.D. Singh
Retd. Dean, KMC & H
3362/0, AE 8th Street
Anna Nagar
Chennai 600 040.

Old movie halls

I thought the first cinema halls in Madras came up only after 1930 or so. However, I was surprised to see an old building behind Murugan Theatre (which is itself the reincarnation of a hoary theatre called Kinema Central) on which the relief on the masonry reads 'Prince Theatre' and below it '1923'. For the innocent (I will not say ignorant) I may add that Murugan Theatre is midway between Mint and Broadway.

Are there older cinema halls in the city?

C.G. Prasad
9, C.S. Mudali Street
Kondithope
Chennai 600 079.

Editor's Note: Electric, now the Philatelic Bureau in the Mount Road Post Office campus, was the oldest (1913). The oldest surviving theatre is the Gaiety (1914) in Blacker's Road, behind the Electric. Still surviving as a shell is the Roxy, built as the Globe in 1917/18.

PLEASE NOTE

- **All letters for The Editor's attention should be addressed to The Editor, c/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 62/63, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.**
- **All business correspondence should be addressed to The Director, Chennai Heritage, 260-A, TTK Road, Chennai 600 018.**

Museum offers a conservation service

The Government Museum, Chennai, a multipurpose museum, was established in 1851. To meet its conservation requirements, a conservation laboratory was opened in 1930.

The Chemical Conservation and Research Laboratory of the Museum is the central laboratory for the conservation purposes of 19 District Museums and the Government Museum, Chennai. It also offers research facility to Ph.D. scholars.

Conservation services have been offered since 1995 for the benefit of those interested in the conservation of antiquities. The Laboratory assures those wishing its use in services, it "will carry out conservation work as per the accepted current technique adopted for the objects preserved in the museum with utmost care". It will also undertake research on the subject(s) if requested.

Apart from examination charges, the Laboratory's conservation labour charges are (in Rupees):

Type of objects	A Simple	B Normal	C Bad	D Very bad	E Worst
Painting (per sq.ft)	100	150	200	250	300
Bronze (per foot)	200	250	300	350	400
Coins (per 100 grams)	20	25	30	35	40
Palm-leaf Manuscripts (per 100 leaves)	50	60	70	80	90
Documents (per sq.ft)	5	10	15	20	25
Wooden objects (per cubic foot)	100	150	200	250	300
Leather objects (per sq.ft)	50	60	70	80	90
Stone objects (per sq.ft)	100	150	200	250	300

Major conservation services extended between October 1999 and March 2000 were

1. Madras Medical College, Chennai 600 003.
2. Government Royapettah Hospital, Chennai 600 014.
3. Government Ophthalmic Hospital, Chennai 600 008.
4. Dr. C. Vijayaraghavachariar Memorial Library, Salem.
5. Madras Christian College, Chennai 600 059.

The Laboratory has a policy of using volunteers interested in conservation for carrying out its conservation work. For carrying out the conservation work at Madras Medical College and Government Ophthalmic Hospital, six students from the Government College of Arts and Crafts, Chennai, were chosen, training was provided to them and they participated in the conservation work.

The life-size bronze statue of Dr. C. Vijayaraghavachariar was restored within three days with the help of 28 students after giving training to them. In all these cases, well-experienced conservation staff of the Laboratory closely supervise the students.

Conservation projects are to be undertaken shortly for the Southern Railway and Government Ophthalmic Hospital, Chennai. (Courtesy: *Museum's Journal*, Government Museum, Chennai.)

V. Jeyaraj
Curator, Chemical Conservation and Research Laboratory





Our OLD is another postcard from **T. Murugavel**. *It featured on the cover of* Phoenix, *the student journal of Sri Venkateswara College of Engineering, Sriperumbudur, with a note in the Editorial 'Sum-up' requesting readers to identify "which part of Madras City it belongs to". A CD was offered for the first correct entry.* Madras Musings *does not know the result of that 'test', but we wonder how many readers would be able to identify the place without the help of the NEW, which is what the area looks like today.*

THE OLD... *The scene is of Mount Road (Anna Salai) in the early 1890s, to judge by the kind of traffic — carriages and carts only — and the absence of tramlines (they appeared in 1895). The building on right is Hotel D'Angeli's that became Bosotto, then Airlines, Hotel, and is now a major Bata showroom and a warren of other shops and offices.* **...& THE NEW**

On the left, where VGP now is, is Whiteway Laidlaw's, part of one of the first department store chains in the East. The 'green' roundabout pre-dates Round Tana — that Indo-Saracenic shelter and fountain that remained there till the 1940's. The building closest the camera, on left, is the showroom of Tawker's, the leading jewellers of the day. (Photograph of the NEW by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)



Two buildings to save

(Continued from Page 1)

out in part to the South India Athletic Association with the remaining portion occupied by the Trust Office. The first floor is an auditorium capable of seating 500 people and has lavishly embellished walls with a raised gallery. This has fallen to a bad state of disrepair and urgent measures are required if further damage is to be prevented.

The report INTACH is committed to prepare will document the present condition of the building and will have a methodical recording of the various components, such as roofs, walls, floors, doors, windows, staircase, finishes and fittings, drainage, mechanical and electrical services.

Architectural measured drawings of the building are to be prepared, including floor plans, elevations and sections. The use of photogrammetry for this purpose, with the aid of the Institute of Remote Sensing, Anna University, is being explored.

The report is to conclude with proposals for the adaptive re-use of the building and also suggestions for any additions or alterations.

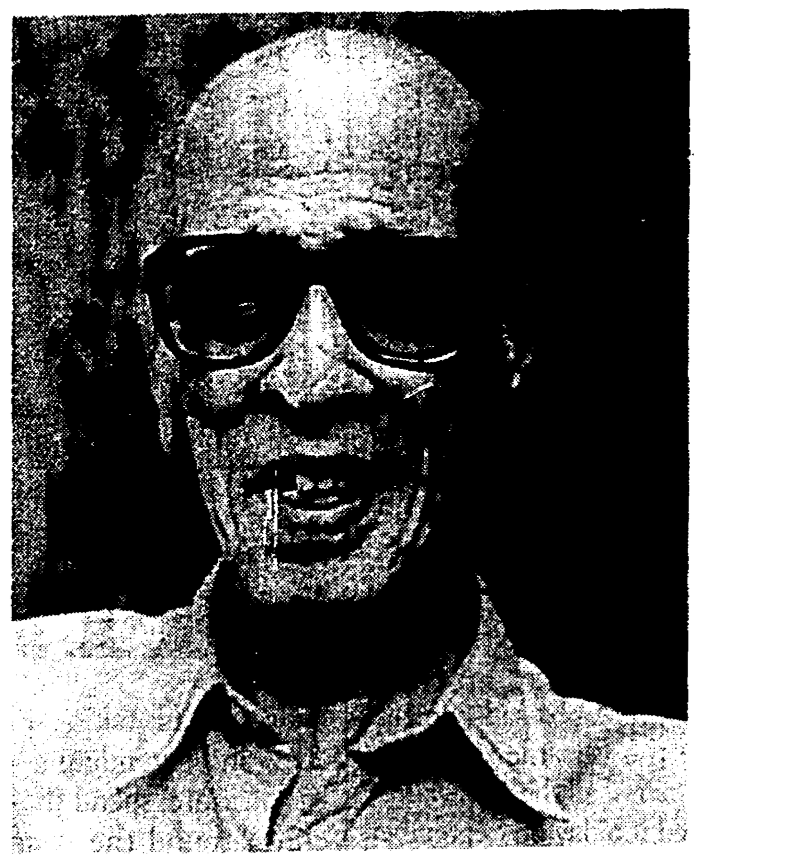
A detailed report is to follow providing all the technical information necessary to draw up schedules, specifications and bills of quantities and will contain:

- Historical research and analysis.
- Drawing and photo documentation.
- Identifying problems and remedial measures.
- Comprehensive work plan and estimates.

The American College Campus is on spacious grounds with large trees in the heart of Madurai.

The main block is of Indo-Saracenic style and has exposed brick walls with turrets and arches in brick and granite. The roof is Madras Terrace and Mangalore tiles, while the flooring is of granite. The Laboratory and adjoining block as well as the Library and Chapel are being considered for restoration.

Nature's spokesman



M. Krishnan, 'Nature's spokesman'. (Courtesy: The Hindu.*)*

M. Krishnan was born in Tirunelveli on the 30th June 1912, the youn-gest of the eight children of the Tamil writer and reformer A. Madhaviah (1872-1925). Madhaviah'... vast output includes the first realistic novel published in Tamil (*Padmavathi Charithram*, 1898), an English novel published in London (*Thillai Govindan*, 1916), as well as essays, short stories, poems and skits. In about the year 1920 he took premature retirement, commuted his pension, and with the proceeds built a house in the Madras locality of Mylapore...

In 1927 Krishnan joined the Presidency College, a since decayed institution, then in its pomp... The subject he most enjoyed was Botany, taught by Prof. P.F. Fyson. Fyson was a fine and devoted field scientist who (judging from Krishnan's references to him in later life) deeply impressed the young student. He accompanied the Fysons on trips to the Nilgiri and Kodaikanal hills, learning science from the Professor and discussing the techniques of water colour painting with his wife.

The friendship with the Fysons did not come in the way of Krishnan getting a Third Class in BA. Job prospects were bleak... The first 'verified factual record' I have of any paid employment dates to 1937, when Krishnan published some drawings and caricatures in the *Madras Mail*. The next year he was publishing essays on book-design in the low-circulation but high-prestige *Indian Affairs* and, more consequentially, nature notes in *The Statesman* (Calcutta) and *The Hindu*... R.K. Narayan was finding out, at about the same time, the concept of the freelancer was unknown to the moral and pecuniary universe of Tamil Brahminism. Thus in the early years of his marriage Krishnan irregularly held a 'regular' job — working initially with the Associated Printers, then with the Madras School of Art, and finally as the Publicity Officer of the local station of All India Radio.

In 1942, at his family's urging and with the help of whatever influence they could command, Krishnan was given employment by the Maharaja of Sandur, a small princely state in the northern part of present-day Karnataka... In Sandur Krishnan served successively as schoolteacher, judge, publicity officer and Political Secretary to the Maharaja. The work was dreary, but there was always the possibility of escape. For in his tours through Sandur the naturalist would come across the sambhur and the wild boar, jackals, jungle cats, porcupines and leopards. In this valley ringed by hills and forests, fields and shrub jungle within and the Tungabhadra flowing through them, the great ruined city of Hampi but a day's bullock-cart journey away, Krishnan could nurture his love of nature and cultural history... Sandur was Krishnan's finishing school or, to vary the metaphor slightly, the laboratory where he conducted the research for his unacknowledged doctoral degree. What he learnt there was communicated in the nature essays, cultural profiles, and short stories he published in the Forties, under his own name in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and under the *nom-de-plume* 'Z' in *The Hindu*...

In 1949, when the state of Sandur disappeared along with 520 others into the Union of India Krishnan returned to Madras... He never took a job again, for the next 47 years making a precarious but always honest living as a writer and photographer. In 1950 he began a fortnightly 'Country Notebook' for *The Statesman* of Calcutta; his last column was printed the day he died (February 18, 1996). Alert and alive, at once scientific and speculative, peppered with allusions to literature and myth, opinionated, and acid in its wit, the column must rank as one of the remarkable achievements of English-language journalism in this country (or any other)...

Krishnan never talked down to his readers, assuming in them a knowledge and range of interests equal to his own. If they had not read Blake (and committed his poems to memory) or did not know who 'Eha' was, they could always go to the library and find out. In what I regard as his finest period (which ran, roughly, from 1948 to 1961), the learning was carried lightly, leavened by the more-than-occasional flash of humour, which in the best Anglophone fashion was generally directed at himself. But as he grew older the tone grew more sombre. The essays were still beautifully crafted and rich in detailed information. However, they were no longer so attentive to the human or cultural context, being natural history in a more straightforward sense. Krishnan changed, so to say, with the times: if from the 1970s we find an intensity of tone and even an impatient hectoring in his essays this was not unrelated to the rapid disappearance of forests and wildlife all over India...

● NATURE'S SPOKESMAN, published by Oxford University Press, brings into print once again the delightful work of M. KRISHNAN on wildlife. The book is introduced and edited by RAMACHANDRA GUHA who today makes reading about the environment a simple pleasure. Courtesy OUP, we today bring you excerpts from Guha's profile of Krishnan, and over the next few months we will bring you from the book a few of Krishnan's articles on Nature's bounty in Tamil Nadu.

Krishnan was an ecological patriot... It is time, he wrote, 'We cultivated a narrow sort of patriotism in our floral preferences'. He could be ruthless in his opposition to species introduced from outside. He was once asked to speak at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, by common consent the most beautiful of our university campuses. It was late February, and the avenues were set alight by the *tabebuia*, whose spectacular yellow flowers were in blossom. The planting of this Central American tree, as of the other species that adorn the Institute, was the handiwork of the wife of the Director. At a reception the lady asked Krishnan what he thought of the campus. 'Disgraceful', he answered, 'You should uproot all those foreign trees, and plant some of our own'. On another occasion, when a kinsman wrote of the death by felling of a *gulmohar* tree near his house, Krishnan shot back: 'Anyway, why regret the demise of a *gulmohar* — an exotic that litters the ground beneath with fallen, faded flowers — a vermilion strumpet from Madagascar? If you want to see a truly impressive crown of red flowers, you should see the flame-of-the forest, *Butea monosperma*, entirely our own, early in summer — 3 or 4 trees close together setting the horizon ablaze...'

(Krishnan came to photography craft late), when he was past forty, but brought to it a ferocity of commitment that was all his own. He strongly preferred black-and-white film to colour, and roll film to 35mm, for it enabled him to make large prints (36" by 24" or bigger still) that showed up animals in the wild in proper detail. However, these preferences ruled out the use of any of the makes of cameras then available in the Indian market. This man, who in his lifetime was unquestionably the 'biggest name in India's wildlife photography', had more or less to manufacture a camera himself. This was, to quote his fellow naturalist E.P. Gee, 'a large, composite affair, with the body of one make and the tele lens of another, and other parts and accessories all ingeniously mounted together by himself. I cannot swear that I saw proverbial bootlace used to fix them all together, but I am sure there must have been some wire and hoop somewhere!' This contraption was known, to master and acolyte alike, as the 'Super-Ponderosa'...

A younger friend who knew him well writes that while 'never guilty of under-estimating his exceptional talent, Krishnan nonetheless lived a life of self-imposed obscurity. When not in the forests, he hibernated in the bush cover of his home-cum-studio in Madras.' There, when he was not developing film, painting a sketch or typing a column, Krishnan indulged in his unnatural interests — detective fiction, Carnatic music, and cricket...

Krishnan once told a friend that he was better known in West Bengal than his native Tamil Nadu (this was said with some regret, for he was, after all, Madhaviah's son). Copies of *The Statesman* rarely reach the city of Madras, but its Delhi edition found its way to the small sub-Himalayan town where I grew up. My father read *The Statesman* for much the same reason that Krishnan wrote for it (it had fewer misprints). The photograph that introduced his column did not hold me — newsprint could scarcely do justice to this master of the black-and-white art — but the writing did...

While visiting Madras in the summer of 1979 and walking down Edward Elliot's Road, I was quickly directed to where Krishnan lived. His home was nondescript; a grey cement block tucked away behind an old Madras bungalow. It was late evening when I got there, catching the naturalist as he emerged from his darkroom, wearing a red checked *lungi*, a roll of film, dripping wet, in his hands.

On Christmas Day, 1995, I was on Edward Elliot's Road once more. Except that it is now Radhakrishnan Salai, and I was visiting, by appointment, another Madras institution, the son of the man who gave the road its (new) name. My visit ended, I walked out onto the pavement and saw, in the near distance, the board of the Rajeshwari Kalyana Mandapam. In minutes I was with Krishnan. He had forgotten our last meeting, but took me into his study. Surrounded by books, a half-filled page scrolled into his typewriter, a cigarette in his hand, he talked for an hour. He still wore the red *lungi*, a dress which, in retrospect, seems to have mocked the pieties of Tamil Brahminism, the safe middle road of the white starched *veshti*, the white *banyan*, and the off-white *poonal*. Six weeks after this second meeting Krishnan was dead. (Excerpted from the 'Introduction' to *Nature's Spokesman* published by Oxford University Press.)

Quizzin' with Ramnan

(Questions 1 to 9 are from the period September 16th to 30th. Questions 10 to 12 pertain to Chennai. Questions 13 to 20 relate to Tamil Nadu.)

1. Name the two glamorous Indians chosen to participate in the first U.N. Messengers of Peace and Goodwill Ambassadors meet.
2. Name the versatile singer-actress, winner of all the top awards, who called it a day on September 28th.
3. Which co-founder of Microsoft quit its board recently?
4. In which weight category did India's Karnam Malleswari win an Olympic bronze?
5. With what prestigious awards have Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu, Mrs. Vidya Devi, Bhaskar Hirjai Save and Somdutt Vedalankar been honoured?
6. Where in India did the Indian Astronomical Observatory commission the world's highest Observatory (a 2m telescope) recently?
7. Name the new complex virus which prevents access to anitivirus sites and creates havoc.
8. Who emerged the fastest male swimmers after tying for the 50m freestyle gold at the Sydney Olympic Games recently?
9. Which Indian city is the third most expensive office market, with occupancy cost of $69.51 per sq.ft.?

* * *

10. Which Indian Airlines aircraft had a providential escape after leaving Chennai on Spetember 26th?
11. Which bank has installed the first ATM facility at the Chennai Central Station?
12. Which American city is the Sister City of Chennai?

* * *

13. Who is the new President of the Tamil Chamber of Commerce?
14. Which 335-year-old world-famous glass company's float glass plant was commissioned at Sriperumbudur on September 27th?
15. Who was awarded this year's coveted S.P. Adithanar Award for Senior Tamil literary figures?
16. Who is the new Chief Electoral Officer of the State?
17. Which University in the State became South India's first 'Five Star' varsity after assessment by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council?
18. Whose translation of the Bible into Tamil in the 18th Century was called 'Golden Version'?
19. With which instrument was the late Sheik Chinna Moulana synonymous?
20. Simple one to round off with. What is common (the list is not all-inclusive) to the Tamil film personalities Kamal Hassan, MGR, Lakshmi, Manorama, Archana?

(Answers on Page 7)

Taking a Monday off...

If you think taking a Monday off and extending a weekend is a pleasure, spend the time cycling around the countryside, staying in a tent beside a riverside or in a cave, or climbing a mountain. These are just a few of the ways of beating the stresses of overworked city life that are becoming popular in Chennai.

Speaking to *Madras Musings*, Ashish Gupta of Milesworth Leisure, said their itineraries include houseboat life in the backwaters and lagoons of Kerala, nature walks in Kodai, spotting elephants and other wildlife in Kabini, once the hunting ground of the Maharaja of Mysore and now surrounded by the Wynaad and Bandipur sanctuaries, trekking through the Dubare forest, cruising on the Periyar River spotting wildlife, bird watching in the Billigni Ranga Hills, white water rafting in the Khali river and game fishing in the Kaveri.

A special treat closer home wilderness trek in the Nagari Hills about 100 km from Chennai. You arrive at the campsite by tractor-trailer and spend the first night there in a tent. The next morning you trek into the hills and explore the caves. The second night is spent in one of the caves.

Milesworth is also planning to promote small towns and villages in Tamil Nadu which are rich in tradition and culture.

Another travel agency enthusiastic about off-the-beaten track weekend holidays is Global Nest Travels. Their weekends include searching for herbs in the forested hills near Salem and 'doing' Pulicat Lake the traditional way by Catamaran.

Milesworth, RM Towers, 108, Chamiers Road, Chennai 600 018. Global Nest. Tel: 573-3101

Rajind N Christy

Women – the decision-makers, despite lack of literacy

(By A Staff Reporter)

In Tamil Nadu, 74 per cent of women participate in decision making, yet nearly three-quarters of them are not literate, according to the first national survey conducted by the Department of Economics and Statistics.

The survey was carried out to collect data for quantifying the economic contribution of women to the national economy and examine gender discrimination and child and women welfare in households.

Over 5000 households, in the districts of Chennai, Kancheepuram, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore, Salem, Erode, Tiruchi, Thanjavur, Virudhunagar and Tuticorin were surveyed.

Child labour was found in all the districts, with about 26.5 per cent of the children in the districts in employment.

The average time spent by men on earning was about 42.54 hours per week compared to 18.97 hours by women. But men spent about 3.19 hours in household management, compared to women who spent 30.46 hours a week. The average time spent by males in taking care of the sick, children, elderly and disabled was 5.46 hours compared to 11.61 hours per week by women. Only 10 per cent of the work done by women in rural areas is valued.

THE DEATH OF A MARSH

(Continued from Page 1)

light does its part. Our misguided sense of development has us destroying such natural reedbed systems (as at Pallikkaranai) while elsewhere, artificial reedbed technology is being developed and promoted to treat industrial effluents like tannery wastes.

While the USA, the forerunner of technology development, and our aspired model, hopes to increase its wetland areas by heavily funding projects for conservation and renewal of wetlands lost since the 1900s to industrial development, we are systematically destroying whatever we have, like these marshes!

If a cyclone were to hit Chennai this season — and there are plentiful rains expected — the area will surely be flooded (due to the reduction in the swamp area) and the worst sufferers will be those translocated and put up on the western side of the road due to the MRTS project. Will Tamil Nadu Environment Minister Pongalur Palanisamy and Environment Secretary Sheela Rani Chunkath, who have done much to reduce pollution by heavy vehicles in the city during peak hours, make all efforts to save the remaining wetlands of Pallikkaranai, since all is not yet lost.

Footnote: Wetlands in India are classified as non-productive wastelands and even though they have wildlife, the Forest Department has no jurisdiction over them and are, therefore, helpless. Even as recently as mid-September bird watchers, watching from the roadside, could count more than a thousand birds in the marsh, which included Pheasant-tailed Jacanas (many in breeding plumage), Moorhens (two species), Bitterns (three species), Purple and Grey Herons, Openbill Storks, Cormorants, Waders from many families (their numbers will increase with the coming winter months) and even predatory birds like Marsh Harriers and a Kestrel which are migrants from northern Asia and Europe. The marsh is as rich as Vedanthangal in species diversity and merits protection and promotion as a wilderness recreation area in Chennai. In the USA, an urban area such as this would definitely be capitalised on, with protection ensured, built watchtowers for viewing, a nature education centre set-up, etc. Why don't we emulate them in these too, why only in constructing Tidel Parks?

* * *

A report in *The New Indian Express* adds:

'Enquiries reveal that a master plan is to be drafted for the development of the swamp, against a report of the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur, and environmentalists' views.

Although the Mott MacDonald Drainage Plan commissioned by the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) and subsequently reviewed by the KBN Engineering and Applied Sciences Inc., Florida, US, assisted by Mukesh and Associates, Salem, in 1996 saw no adverse impact on the environment, the recent NEERI report has suggested building a reservoir in the swamp area, it is learnt.

But what is planned now in the area are a railway locoshed, residential colonies and even Tidel II.

While experts question the need of swamping Chennai with such projects when secondary cities in the State are demanding a share in development, environmentalists fear large-scale eco-destruction.

They agree that the potential of the 'Tambaram-Velachery information highway' needs to be tapped, but object to disturbing the entire swamp land.

The Tamil Nadu chapter of the Indian Institute of Architects has suggested confining 'development' to 150 metres on either side of the road.

If the land is earmarked for institutions, the damage to environment is likely to be less, they said.

The Consumer and Civic Action Group, which filed a writ petition in the High Court in 1998, pointed out that the 'development' is being done without re-classification of these areas from open space and recreational zones in the master plan. Planning and building approvals have not been granted either.'

Editor's Note: *Madras Musings* has been highlighting this threat from October 1997. But who listens? Official bulldozing just continues.

The golden age of Carnatic music



The late M.L. Vasanthakumari

'My mother Lalithangi and my father Ayyaswamy Iyer were my first *gurus*. My parents, to whom I was born as an only child on July 3, 1928, in Madras, were both musicians. My father had a keen interest in Hindustani music as well. Given these interests of my parents, I grew up amidst sounds of music listening to the songs of Purandara, the *kritis* of the Tiruvarur Trinity and other Carnatic music composers and to *khayal-s*, *thumri-s* and *dhun-s* rendered by visiting Hindustani musicians. My parents printed and published a book on Purandara's *kritis* in 1940.

I never had any formal training and this has always been my regret. I never learnt *sarali*, *janta varisai* or *alankaram*. So I never teach beginners. My style is based on G.N.B's school of music. Even though my parents were my first *gurus*, I had my training under G.N.B. I started learning from him at a very early age. In fact, it was he who recognised my potential and urged my parents to discontinue my studies and concentrate on music. I can attribute my style to G.N.B's school of music because my voice is highly suitable to his school. I love to teach, because while teaching we also improvise, we learn and we also become our own guru and disciple — *Lakshyam-Lakshanam*.

G.N.B. was a very creative artiste. He was also highly intellectual. He was a literature graduate. He could listen to any kind of music and write the notation in shorthand. He could actually measure *gamaka-s*. He had the versatility of Ariyakudi, the fresh style and novelty of Maharajapuram Vishwanatha Iyer and the imagination (*kalpana*) of Rajaratnam Pillai. He was gifted with a golden voice. He had so much respect for Ariyakudi that he would never sit before him.

Sometimes I would learn a song from him in the morning and present it in a *kutchery* in the evening and he would always rebuke me saying, "Is it a readymade dress? This is a blind way of singing and nothing but mimicking. You should learn first, improvise, and contribute further by adding your own style".

I think all of us — Brinda, M.S., D.K.P. all nearly 10 years my senior — could be called child prodigies because we started our careers when we were still children. My other contemporaries were N.C. Vasantha Kokilam and Savithri Ganesh, who were very good but died young. We all had our own style and individuality but appreciated each other's music.

Among the male singers there were Ariyakudi Shri Ramanuja Ayyangar, Madurai Shri Mani Iyer, Musiri, G.N.B., Semmangudi, the Alathur brothers, accompanists like Rajamanikam Pillai, Chowdiah, and the young T.N. Krishnan on the violin and stalwarts like Palghat Mani Iyer, Murugabhoopathy and Palani Subramaniam Pillai on the *mridangam*. I think I would call this period between 1940 and 1965 as the golden period of Carnatic Music.

In my opinion it was Ariyakudi Ramanuja Ayyangar who established the right pattern for a *kutchery*. Attending his *kutchery* was like visiting a departmental store. Everything would be available — his *kutchery* would have a fast *varnam*, Thyagaraya *krithi*, *ragam*, *thanam*, patriotic songs like *Kai raattai*, the *bhakthi* aspect like *Vaishnavajanatho*, *Thirupavai* etc. In short, he standardised a *kutchery*. There was never a dull moment. He could always hold an audience enthralled this way. He along with Kumbakonam Rajamanikam Pillai and Palghat Mani would send audiences into raptures.

His period, I feel, was also the important landmark in the evolution of the *kutchery paddhathi*, because till then the method was different. We can say that he was a trend-setter. This was also the time when the singers stopped singing for patrons and also at the courts of kings. There was also the influence of drama — thanks to S.G. Kittappa and others.

Thiruvaduthurai Rajaratnam Pillai's *kalpana* was amazing. His speciality was his presentation of *ragas* and his favourites were *Thodi* and *Shanmugapriya*. I do not feel we can ever hear his kind of *raga* presentation any more. His only regret was that he did not know any small *krithi-s* (*chillarai*) and would keep asking G.N.B. to teach him a few. G.N.B. would laughingly brush him aside saying, "We will keep the *chillarai*, but you should not step down from the pedestal your *rasikas* have placed you upon. Your name has already been engraved in the history of music for your presentation of *raga*".

There should be a lot of give and take between the singer and the accompanying artistes. There should be no ego clash as to who is more knowledgeable than the other. There should be a perfect understanding and harmony between the singer and the player. The idea is to please the audience. Enjoying the discomfort of one artiste and certain loud manners and gimmicks should be avoided. I also feel that technicians who install the mike system should have a basic knowledge of music, otherwise there is so much noise that it becomes more like a tea shop.

A teacher should be sincere and give of her best to the student. Only then can she bring the best from the student. *Suddha swara* practice and breathing exercises are very important and so is *akaram*. Music, I feel, can be correlated to any subject like Maths or History and in this way teaching can be made a joyful experience.

Why does everyone sing Purandara's songs in different *raga-s*? His *Bhagyadalakshmi baramma* for example is sung in every household in a different *raga*. I even once mentioned at a public function in Bangalore that a standard *raga* should be set for each and every song of Purandaradasa. After all, he is the *Pithamaha* of Carnatic music. Sadly nothing has been done till today.'

• *Sampradaya*, a centre for South Indian music traditions, has an invaluable archival collection of Carnatic music recordings of the great masters, recordings of interviews with leading musicians and singers and a wealth of books and other documentation of music and musicians. This interview with M.L. Vasanthakumari was recorded in 1989 and was published in *Sampradaya's* Newsletter to commemorate her 10th death anniversary this month. *Sampradaya*, which seeks additional members, is at 1, Musiri Subramanian Salai, Mylapore Chennai 600 004. Phone: 499-3359. e-mail: samprada@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in

Dates for your Diary

Till October 21: Solo exhibition of sculptures by Niloufer Seth (at Appa Rao Gallery)



Till October 24: An exhibition of paintings by Sachida Nagadev (at Artworld, Ganeshpuram).

October 21: A lecture programme on animation by Prof. Walter Schobert of the Film Museum, Frankfurt. (at Max Mueller Bhavan, 10.30 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.)

October 27: *Modernism & the Beginning of Art Movement in South India* — An illustrated slide lecture by Ashrafi S. Bhagat. (6.30 p.m. at Appa Rao Art Gallery.)

October 28: *First Generation South Indian Artists and Art Activity* — An illustrated slide lecture by Ashraji, S. Bhagat and Alamelu (6.30 p.m. at Appa Rao Art Gallery.)

October 28: A workshop on leaves for children.

What is a leaf? Some books tell us that it is the part of a plant that breathes and makes food. And we see leaves all around us — on trees or lying on the ground. But have you ever looked very closely at one? And if all leaves perform the same function, why are there so many different sizes and shapes?

In this workshop with Sirish Rao, who has written several books for children including *Leaf Life*, a nature notebook, you can look at, smell, feel, touch and, if you feel like it, eat a few leaves to find out exactly what a leaf does. You will look at leaves on their own as well as the larger community of plants and animals that they are part of. There will also be a display of leaves from all around the world. Be prepared for a leafy day. (For 8-12 year-olds, at the British Council, 10.00 a.m.-12.30 p.m. & 2.00-4.30 p.m. Two batches: 20 per session.)

October 28 and 29: Workshop on Handmade Paper — the art of recycling paper and embellishing it by colouring the pulp with natural additives like flowers, seeds, leaves and twine. (at DakshinaChitra, contact 4462435/4918943.)

November 4 and 5: Workshop on Kutch Embroidery. (at DakshinaChitra)

November 25 and 26: Workshop on Tie & Dye. (at DakshinaChitra)

Answers to Quiz

1. Miss Universe Lara Dutta and Manisha Koirala; 2. Barbara Streisand; 3. Paul Allen; 4. 69kg category; 5. The Jamnalal Bajaj Awards; 6. Hanle in Ladakh; 7. MTX; 8. United States' Anthony Earvin and Gary Hall (jr.); 9. Mumbai.

* * *

10. IC-555 to Singapore; 11. Indian Bank; 12. Denver, Colorado.

* * *

13. S. Santhanam (Sattva Business Group); 14. Saint Gobain; 15. The poet 'Surada'; 16. Mrutyunjay Sarang; 17. Madras University; 18. Rev. John Phillip Fabricus; 19. The nadaswaram; 20. All have won National Awards either for Best Actor, Actress or Supporting Role.

The tribe of sportscribes

● **by K. Sundarajan**
Former Sports Editor,
The Hindu

The first in any list of sports writers who would be doing their job in Elysian Fields should, without argument, be

S.K. Gurunathan:

"Guru" to all aspiring journalists. He may not watch the cricket match with such concentration as a few other colleagues. But he wouldn't miss an important happening. As the match is in progress he would take down casual notes. After the match he would not make a beeline to the office, but go to the pavilion, have a chat with the players, managers and take the score sheet from the official scorer. I forget his name. He would have prepared such a score sheet that you could recreate an entire match. It would contain all the salient points. For instance, if someone dropped a catch or was lucky not to be run out or who gave whom a 'life' you would find them in a separate paper. Anyone could go through it, but it was Guru who gained the maximum benefit. The advantage that Guru gained by hobnobbing with the players was that he could get a few important tips which would give colour to his reports. He was never harsh on players, nor would he exaggerate. He always thought much about his wicket-keeping and to an errant 'keeper he would offer advice in his column.

Not always did he get a favourable response from foreign players, though his familiarity with C.P. Johnstone helped a lot. On one occasion, when he addressed an Australian wicket-keeper by his first name, the response was cold and as Guru was going away he could hear a few remarks which he would not forget even in his sleep. What I did not like in him was his almost contempt for such games as football, basketball and even carrom. If I attempted to write a colourful report about a football match he would growl and tell me, "how many footballers know English enough to appreciate your usages". But I continued. Even today Basketball Venkatraman would recall how I used to interview the coach after the Loyola tournament. In other words I took pleasure (call it mischievous) in trying to equate these poor cousins of cricket with the nobles. I would remain grateful to him for ever teaching me the basics and priorities. He would tell me, "Papa, the first thing you do in your report is to give the result in the opening paragraph. Don't deny praise to the winners. Don't try to teach the players". How many times I violated Guru's instructions I have lost count. But I respect him as the greatest cricket teacher. Yes, even alongside of Fingleton. Guru was the first correspondent deputed by *The Hindu* to cover a tour to England. Alas, it proved his undoing. He lost health. How could you be a strict vegetarian in England in those days? Pardon me Guru for going public. Oh, Sir, I haven't said a word about his weakness for colour! If he saw a bevy of girls in the audience he would spend some time with them for a chat. Did Prabhu confess to such a trait too?!

P.N. Sundaresan:

Raja to his friends, PNS an aggressive opening batsman and swing bowler for Madras University, his reports were too technical for anyone to dare question his views. Unlike Guru, he would make the quickest getaway, finish his report and go for some religious discourse. "My homage to Gurunathan is the continuance of *Indian Cricket* under my humble editorship," he would say. He was very hurt when *The Hindu* management had N. Ram cover Clive Lloyd's West Indies tour of India. Though deadlines simply vanished, Ram's classic reports (especially of the controversial Bombay Test) were always looked forward to.

N.S. Ramaswamy:

A Neville Cardus of India (his pen-name was The Cardusian), his turn of phrase, love for English cricket and an ability to make even a mediocre match fascinating to read did not however help *The Hindu* which sent him to cover a tour of a foreign team — I don't remember the name of the country — for invariably the reports arrived rather late for early editions. After some time he himself opted out of the assignment and returned to deskwork. NSR was a role model to Prabhu for cricket language.

T. Govindarajan:

T.G. always claimed that Wensley told him, "Sorry, boy, you are Mankad's contemporary. There is no future for you as a left arm spinner." T.G. wrote beautiful poetry and hence his reports excelled in aesthetics, whether it was football, volleyball or basketball. He could sing in seven foreign languages and whenever we went together in a car, Mount Road (now Anna Salai) would witness two young men — the other was Yours Sincerely — doing a duet at the top of our voices. Alas, he died in a traffic accident, just two years after his retirement. Humour and laughter died with TG who was not a professional watcher of the game. He would miss incidents and would take notes from others. But his reports would look more realistic. That was the secret of his command over the language. I used to joke, "TG, your reports of unseen matches are more thrilling to read than seen matches."

S.P. Vasudevan:

Vasu was the password for all sports journalists in Madras. He was responsible for creating so many facilities during Test matches — including lunch with officials. He was daring enough to comment on the disgraceful behaviour of an English batsman who, not agreeing with an umpire's decision, broke the panel of a window with his bat. This prompted a snobbish veteran to say what happened in the pavilion should be ignored by the reporter. "Cricket is a gentleman's game. A player is expected to be a gentleman throughout," was Vasu's reply.

K.S. Narasimhan:

KSN always held that while Gurunathan got the official Madras Ranji Trophy team from C.P. Johnstone, not easily accessible to other reporters suffering from a certain inferiority complex, KSN was able to get the team from the club bearer while he went round with the list to the selected players. KSN's forte was tennis. Like 'No Shirt' Varadachari, KSN was a no-pant reporter. He did not discard his dhoti even when he was assigned to cover a Davis Cup tie in Bombay.

T.D. Parthasarathy:

The highest dignitary in the sports echelons did not overawe him. He once put even Raja Bhalinder Singh in his place at a meeting of the IOA. Milkha Singh becomes emotional whenever T.D.'s name crops up; so much did T.D. do for this great athlete. Imagine Lindwall riding pillion on T.D.'s motor cycle for a photo 'shoot' for *Sport & Pastime*. T.D. was the soul and spirit of that weekly. A pity that he left it in a huff. It became extinct soon afterwards. He was the first sports reporter sent by an Indian paper to cover an Olympics (Rome).

M. Sambandam:

He played First Division Cricket, then took up an assignment with the *Indian Express* as sports reporter and covered all local cricket. His description of the matches was very well appreciated, since he himself had played cricket. Jimmy helped junior reporters in every way — (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

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